UNITED NATIONS

E

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/30/8
28 May 2018
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Thirtieth session
Beirut, 25-28 June 2018

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

Proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies at ESCWA

Summary

At its fourth meeting, the Executive Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) approved a proposal to establish an Arab centre for climate change policies to prepare studies and build Arab capacity, especially in the field of climate change negotiations. The Executive Committee requested that the proposal be considered at the thirtieth session of the Commission. The centre will focus on the following five pillars of work: delivering technical assistance and advisory services; building capacity through institutional strengthening and policymaking; strengthening regional platforms for exchange, coordination and consensus building; promoting integrated responses to and management of climate-related challenges; and providing access to regional knowledge products, data and information.

The centre's substantive areas of work will focus on preparing Arab countries for climate change negotiations, supporting Arab countries in the preparation of projects for funding, assisting Arab countries in formulating climate change policies and measures in the areas of climate change adaptation and mitigation, and informing policies and projects through scientific assessments and evidence-based studies. The centre will be located at and managed by ESCWA. Core funding and staffing for the centre will be secured from the regular budget, with complementary funding for regional activities requested from extrabudgetary resources.

18-00231

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	*Page*
Introduction		1-3	3
Chapter			
I.	MANDATES FROM MEMBER STATES	4-10	3
II.	BACKGROUND	11-16	4
III.	VISION	17-18	5
IV.	PILLARS OF WORK	19-25	6
V.	INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE	26-31	7
VI.	RESOURCE MOBILIZATION	32-37	8
VII.	NEXT STEPS	38-39	9

Introduction

1. The fourth meeting of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held in Beirut on 13 and 14 December 2017. The Committee approved a proposal to establish an Arab centre for climate policies focused on preparing studies and building the capacity of Arab countries, especially in the field of climate change negotiations. The Committee requested that the proposal be considered at the thirtieth ESCWA session.

2. The proposal, set out in document E/ESCWA/2017/EC.4/4(Part III), provides background on climate change initiatives undertaken by ESCWA in the areas of climate change assessment, adaptation, mitigation, negotiations, financing and technology. It also reviews the experiences of other United Nations regional commissions in supporting member States on climate change, including the operations of the African Climate Policy Centre at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa since 2011. The proposal outlines the vision, work scope, components, work modalities, resource mobilization plan and the next steps for establishing an Arab centre for climate change policies at ESCWA.

3. The present report sets out the steps taken to establish the centre since the proposal was approved in December 2017. Based on mandates from intergovernmental bodies and feedback from member States and regional partners, there is consensus that the centre will provide an effective umbrella for consolidating and upscaling the climate change services and support offered by ESCWA to Arab countries.

I. MANDATES FROM MEMBER STATES

4. The proposal to establish an Arab centre for climate change policies was submitted to the Executive Committee at its fourth meeting, pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Committee at its third meeting held in Rabat on 6 and 7 May 2017, which requested ESCWA to "prepare a comprehensive vision on establishing an Arab climate change centre within the secretariat, similarly to other regional commissions, covering the desired goals of the centre, funding sources and potential activities, to be presented at the next meeting of the Executive Committee".

5. At its third and fourth meetings, the Executive Committee welcomed the training activities implemented by ESCWA to build the capacity of Arab countries in preparing projects to request financing from international climate change funds. Moreover, at its fourth meeting, the Committee adopted the report of the twelfth session of the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources (Amman, 22-24 March 2017), and the report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Energy (Cairo, 14-16 May 2017).

6. At its twelfth session, the Committee on Water Resources endorsed the first Arab climate change assessment report issued under the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), and requested the ESCWA secretariat to provide additional resources to enhance regional knowledge in the areas of climate policies, assessment and adaptation. The Committee also recommended supporting Arab institutions and researchers in preparing scientific studies and peer reviewed articles; helping countries to develop strategic plans for combating climate change by identifying priorities and organizing capacity-building workshops focused on the importance of technology transfer, capacity-building and awareness-raising; assisting member States in preparing climate change project proposals to secure funding; and providing training on climate change adaptation using integrated water resource management tools and on the preparation of research proposals.

7. At its eleventh session, the Committee on Energy supported the development of an integrated vision for an Arab centre for climate policies based at ESCWA, setting out the centre's expected accomplishments, funding sources and activities for consideration and adoption at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

8. The centre's establishment was also supported by the Arab Ministerial Water Council at its tenth ministerial session (Kuwait City, 2 May 2018) through a resolution stating that the Council values the

efforts of ESCWA to establish an Arab climate change policy centre to support the provision of technical assistance, capacity-building and advisory services to Arab countries on a range of climate change issues, and asks ESCWA to report on the status of establishing this centre at the next session of the Arab Ministerial Water Council.

9. Furthermore, Arab climate change negotiators attending the tenth Regional Workshop on Capacity Development for Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab Countries, held in Kuwait in April 2018, recommended that the Arab centre for climate change policies should pursue activities related to climate finance and capacity-building to assist Arab States in preparing projects to secure resources from global climate funds; climate change accounting; implementing nationally determined contributions (NDCs) submitted by Arab States to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) under the Paris Agreement, and translating NDCs into visions and action plans; conducting impact assessment and costing of response measures; and increasing understanding of the Paris Agreement and of carbon markets, transparency, and compliance modalities and finance.

10. In addition to resolutions and recommendations adopted through intergovernmental processes, Arab countries have requested ESCWA support on a variety of climate change issues, including repeated requests by the Arab Group of climate change negotiators and the League of Arab States to organize regional workshops; requests for training on climate change impact and vulnerability assessment tools from ministries of water, agriculture and environment in Egypt, Lebanon, the Sudan and Tunisia; requests from Iraq, Kuwait and Oman for technical assistance and seminars on climate change impact assessment findings and their implications; requests for technical training on sand and dust storms and seasonal forecasting from Arab meteorological services; technical assistance requests to support mitigation efforts pursued by Lebanon, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen; and requests for training and technical contributions to support work on mitigation conducted by the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity and the Arab Union of Electricity. The upscaling of collaboration with the Green Climate Fund, the Climate Technology Centre and Network, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Islamic Development Bank and the 11 RICCAR partner organizations is also underway. ESCWA is responding to requests and invitations for collaboration as swiftly as possible by drawing upon existing staff, extrabudgetary resources and funding provided through the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation.

II. BACKGROUND

11. Since the adoption of the first Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change, issued in December 2007 by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, the assistance of ESCWA to its member States has been clustered around the following four themes: climate change assessment; adaptation; sustainable energy; and negotiations. Support in the areas of climate finance and technology is largely provided under a framework of regional preparations for climate change negotiations. These efforts have supported regional cooperation, coherence, capacity-building, positioning and understanding of the climate change challenges facing the Arab region.

12. As part of those efforts, ESCWA has been building the capacity of Arab climate change negotiators since 2013, in partnership with the League of Arab States and, more recently, with support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The workshops have assisted Arab countries prepare their NDCs, and have provided them with a regional platform to engage with the Green Climate Fund and the Climate Technology Centre and Network to formulate project proposals for investment. They have also strengthened the work of the Arab Group of climate change negotiators by providing a common venue for exchange prior to global negotiation sessions, which has helped with information exchange and positioning with respect to Arab countries' priorities. Discussions on the Paris Agreement have informed regional perspectives on adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology, capacity-building and transparency.

13. ESCWA has been coordinating RICCAR implementation since 2010, which provides a scientific basis for informing climate change policy and priority setting in the Arab region. The initiative is coordinated under the auspices of the Arab Ministerial Water Council in partnership with 10 international and regional organizations, with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). These efforts resulted in the first *Arab Climate Change Assessment Report* in 2017, which provided regional climate modelling and hydrological modelling projections for the Arab region, and a vulnerability assessment of key socioeconomic sectors until the end of the century through a region-specific geospatial integrated assessment methodology. ESCWA also supports the establishment of an Arab climate outlook forum and a RICCAR regional knowledge hub to facilitate access to modelling outputs, training materials, datasets and technical reports focused on Arab priorities. Preparations are underway to launch the second phase of RICCAR activities, which will be incorporated into the centre's work.

14. A Sida-funded project on water and food security in the Arab region is drawing upon RICCAR datasets, tools and methods to provide training and technical assistance to Arab countries. Such activities build the capacity of ministries responsible for agriculture and water resources to conduct their own studies on the effects of climate change on the agricultural sector at various scales of analysis and for different crops.

15. The ESCWA-led United Nations Development Account project on Developing the Capacities of the Arab Countries for Climate Change Adaptation by Applying Integrated Water Resources Management Tools has issued a regional training manual comprising five modules focused on the environmental, agricultural, health, human settlements and economic sectors. The project and RICCAR were supported by the Adaptation to Climate Change in the Water Sector in the MENA Region (ACCWaM) project led by GIZ.

16. ESCWA has also implemented a series of regional and interregional United Nations Development Account projects aimed at building the capacity of Arab countries on climate change mitigation for poverty alleviation and sustainable development through renewable energy investments; promoting energy efficiency for climate change mitigation and sustainable development through the formulation of energy efficiency investment projects; and promoting the water-energy-food security nexus within the context of climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Complementary activities have been implemented to support clean energy, including an expert workshop in 2017 on the use, transfer and storage of carbon technology in the Arab region, in collaboration with the National Oil and Gas Authority of Bahrain. ESCWA is also a member of the Policy Group of the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum, and takes part in various technical and policy stakeholder meetings to support Arab countries.

III. VISION

17. The Arab centre for climate change policies will aim to strengthen the capacity of Arab countries to better understand and address the implications of climate change for sustainable development in the Arab region, by supporting science-based regional platforms, capacity development for institutional strengthening, and the provision of technical and policy advisory services for Arab countries and stakeholders in an integrated, multisectoral manner that considers national priorities within the context of regional challenges and global development goals.

18. The centre will be dedicated to helping Arab countries better prepare and respond to climate change challenges facing the region. Targeted beneficiaries of the centre's services and knowledge products will include ministries of planning, foreign affairs, energy, agriculture, water, environment and social and economic affairs. Intergovernmental councils and interagency committees focused on the preparation and implementation of NDCs and the achievement of the SDGs will directly benefit from the services and knowledge products generated by the centre. Specialized institutions and research centres able to inform policymaking will also be targeted beneficiaries of capacity development and knowledge generation exercises, with special attention given to involving women and young graduates in the centre's training programmes to support institutional strengthening and sustainability at the national level.

IV. PILLARS OF WORK

19. The Arab centre for climate change policies will serve United Nations member States located in the Arab region. The centre will focus on the following five pillars of work.

20. Pillar 1 will deliver technical assistance and policy advisory services to Arab countries based on collective or country-level requests. This includes providing demand-driven services to Arab countries in the areas of development planning, adaptation policies, climate change assessment, disaster risk reduction, technology transfer, and project preparation to finance NDCs so as to meet national targets. Support will also be provided through national and subnational applications of regional methodologies, models and toolkits, delivered through a minimum of five missions per year following requests from countries and will be complemented by scientific assessments to inform policymaking.

21. Pillar 2 will build the capacity of Arab countries and regional stakeholders through institutional strengthening and training, by providing technical training in the form of regional or national workshops on models, tools and financial instruments that support climate change negotiations, assessments, access to finance and technology transfer, and by offering regular updates to climate change negotiators and actors in Arab countries on new and emerging developments in the climate change arena. Under this pillar, governmental and non-governmental researchers will be trained on how to draw upon regional knowledge resources and publish articles in internationally peer-reviewed journals to better highlight the concerns and challenges facing Arab countries in international forums, including in global reports produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This will require conducting at least two regional workshops per year for Arab climate change negotiators, and delivering targeted training to specialized agencies and research institutions in Arab countries.

22. Pillar 3 will seek to strengthen regional platforms for regional knowledge exchange, policy coordination and consensus building, such as the Arab Group in their preparations for global climate change negotiations; regional dialogues that support Arab positioning with respect to climate change dimensions of global agreements (such as the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development); and an Arab climate outlook forum in delivering regional consensus outputs on common climate trends, seasonal forecasts and tailored climate services for various national and sectoral stakeholder groups. In addition to facilitating regular meetings of Arab country representatives serving on those platforms, at least one regional meeting will be held per year on the intersection between climate change policymaking and the SDGs.

23. Pillar 4 will promote integrated responses to and management of climate-related challenges affecting water, energy and food security and the livelihoods of vulnerable groups, by examining and advancing the means of implementation and the evidence needed to support the integrated management of natural resources and gender-sensitive policy and programme interventions in the areas of assessment, technology, finance, capacity-building and institutional coordination. This will require at least five national workshops per year to assist national stakeholders in drawing upon regional and global experience to inform climate action across sectors.

24. Pillar 5 will provide access to regional knowledge products, data and information through the expansion of the RICCAR regional knowledge hub to incorporate additional resources and technical tools informing climate change assessment, adaptation, mitigation, disaster risk reduction, financing and technology transfer in key sectors in the Arab region. This will entail the development of geospatial information tools and applications that can assist Arab countries and stakeholders to better understand the implication of climate change across subnational and national boundaries. Requests for assistance and services could be funnelled through the regional knowledge hub using intergovernmental mechanisms or stakeholder requests to provide continual access to information and best practices and to support the generation of new scientific research and analysis. This will require strengthening in-house capacity in the generation and delivery of geographic information system products and services tailored to the needs of member States.

25. The Arab centre for climate change policies will also assist Arab countries in pursuing climate change action through global agreements related to the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, financing for development, and regional Arab strategies and action plans related to climate change, disaster risk reduction, water security, agricultural development, energy and sustainable development.

V. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

26. The Arab centre for climate change policies will be based at ESCWA in the Sustainable Development Policies Division, and consist of a technical bureau and an online platform that builds upon the RICCAR regional knowledge hub.

27. The technical bureau will include at least two full-time officers with advanced experience in climate change in the Arab region, one programme officer and a part-time administrative assistant. At least one senior officer will be versed in climate change negotiations and means of implementation. The second technical officer will have advanced expertise in geospatial information tools and climate change modelling. The bureau will be supported by senior ESCWA staff within the Division and from other divisions to improve climate change mainstreaming and incorporation of climate-related risks to sustainable development in ESCWA activities. The bureau will also be supported by a bilingual programme officer responsible for planning, monitoring and reporting, coordinating communications with member States, and overseeing the preparation and dissemination of knowledge products.

28. The online platform will be responsible for disseminating knowledge resources, in complementarity with the RICCAR regional knowledge hub. The online presence of the hub consists of a website providing access to technical materials (managed by ESCWA) and a data portal to geospatial datasets and maps (managed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). Regular reporting on the RICCAR regional knowledge hub will be provided to the Arab Ministerial Water Council's Technical, Scientific and Advisory Committee by ESCWA and the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid and Dry Lands (ACSAD) of the League of Arab States, which jointly serve as the hub's secretariat. Requests for RICCAR-related support and services by member States will also be funnelled through the hub.

29. An advisory mechanism will be established to support regional consultations on the formulation and review of the centre's programme of work, and to promote coordination and coherence of the centre's activities across its pillars of work and with other national, regional and global climate change initiatives.

30. The centre will operate based on a biannual work programme, which will be implemented through the technical bureau with the support of substantive, programmatic and administrative ESCWA staff and regional and international partners. Regular monitoring and reporting of the centre's outputs and impacts will be included in reports prepared by the host division.

31. In addition to drawing upon the technical expertise of ESCWA staff, the secretariat maintains a strong network of partners and collaborators on climate change. This includes the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies (for instance, ACSAD, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development), sister United Nations agencies (for instance, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UN Environment, UNESCO, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Meteorological Organization), international organizations (for instance, the International Renewable Energy Agency), climate research centres (for instance, the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute, the Cyprus Institute), and the Green Climate Fund and the Climate Technology Centre and Network. ESCWA can bridge and bring added value to the work of those global and regional institutions by adapting support on climate change to the Arab context, and by fostering dialogue and exchange among member States. Strengthening existing partnerships and forging new ones will support the quick operationalization of the centre's activities.

VI. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

32. The ability of ESCWA to deliver on the above work programme will depend on the availability of human and financial resources needed to render the Arab centre for climate change policies operational. An estimated budget of $6 million is required to sustain the centre for six years. This budget is estimated based on the provision of services and support to Arab countries through an ongoing series of programmes and activities focused on climate change assessment, adaptation, mitigation, negotiations, financing and technology transfer, which would be delivered through the above-mentioned five pillars of work.

33. Ensuring regular staffing and a reliable line of funding will reduce transaction costs associated with allocating human and financial resources in response to ad hoc and regular requests received from member States for support. This will allow for improved planning, coherence, coordination, efficiency and transparency of the knowledge products and services delivered to member States to support climate change policy. As an interim stop-gap measure, the six-month recruitment of a regional advisor on climate change is underway through the Regional Programme of Technical Cooperation to help the secretariat respond to the increasing number of requests from member States.

34. The provision of those services will require at least three regional meetings per year (two dedicated to climate change negotiations preparations) and five national capacity-building workshops per year (on climate assessment, adaptation planning and/or means of implementation). Outputs will include at least one regional report per year and two briefing notes per year, drawing on scientific analysis to inform regional exchange and policy discussion on pressing climate change topics for negotiation and action, which would be made available in Arabic and English and disseminated via the regional knowledge hub. These outputs and services will be delivered through the technical bureau with the support of dedicated personnel assigned to the centre and ESCWA staff. Collaboration with at least five institutional partners with demonstrated and advanced experience in climate change would complement the regional knowledge base available at ESCWA.

35. To deliver this work, the centre will need technical and programmatic staff ($1.8 million); partnerships ($1.2 million); equipment ($50,000); meetings, missions and travel ($1.89 million); contractual services for printing, translation, and others ($280,000); and programme support costs ($780,000) if funds are secured through extra-budgetary processes. Based on the estimated budget of $6 million, this allocates 30 per cent to staffing; 20 per cent to partnerships; 1 per cent to equipment; 31 per cent to meetings, mission and travel; 5 per cent to contractual services; and 13 per cent to programme support costs.

36. Preliminary discussions have already taken place with Sida with regard to continuing regional collaboration on climate change and water in the Arab region, with interest expressed in RICCAR follow-up activities. New regional projects are also coming online with Sida financial support and through the United Nations Development Account, which will contribute to the centre's activities. The Islamic Development Bank and the Green Climate Fund have expressed interest in contributing to and collaborating with the centre. Additional project funding for capacity development activities might be requested from the United Nations Development Account and through the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation, which could provide support for the delivery of advisory services in response to requests from member States.

37. ESCWA has extensive experience in leading, coordinating and implementing climate change projects to support Arab countries. Climate change programming at ESCWA over the past seven years includes RICCAR ($4.1 million from Sida); ACCWaM ($470,500 plus in-kind support from GIZ); a regional initiative on small-scale renewable energy applications in rural areas in the Arab region ($5 million); and approximately $500,000 for each of the following six United Nations Development Account projects implemented over the last five years: capacity-building on climate change mitigation for poverty alleviation in Western Asia (2011-2013); promoting energy efficiency investments for climate change mitigation and sustainable development (led by the Economic Commission for Europe and implemented in partnership with the five regional commissions) (2012-2014); Developing the Capacities of the Arab Countries for Climate Change Adaptation by Applying Integrated Water Resources Management Tools (2014-2017); Developing the Capacity of

ESCWA Member Countries to Address the Water and Energy Nexus for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (2014-2017); Promoting Renewable Energy Investments for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development (led by ESCWA and implemented with the Economic Commission for Europe) (2015-2017); and Up-scaling Energy Efficiency in the Residential and Services Sectors in the Arab Region (2018-2020).

VII. NEXT STEPS

38. The preparation of detailed project proposals is underway in the light of ongoing consultations with potential donors and regional partners in support of the centre's five pillars of work. Member States are invited to advise ESCWA on specific technical assistance and capacity-building support they would like the centre to provide. In tandem, ESCWA will continue to strengthen and forge partnerships to support the operations and delivery of services through the centre.

39. ESCWA will report regularly to its ministerial sessions and the Executive Committee on progress achieved in the establishment and operationalization of the centre, and invites the thirtieth ESCWA session to adopt a resolution to that effect.